The Chicago Hebrew Mission (CHM) and their publication, *The Jewish Era*

I haven't been able to confirm whether Rev. J. I. Fles was acquainted with William Blackstone or just aware of him in the earliest years when the CHM began in the late 1880s. The Blackstone archive in Wheaton, IL said that they couldn't find Fles at all in their records. However considering that Fles must have had to go through Chicago's railroad station then, it seems likely to me that they had already met. Fles probably sought for like-minded, important individuals. Or even vice versa; since Fles already advocated / believed in spreading the Gospel to Jews in his *Three Bible Lessons*, written in 1879.

The CHM began publishing The Jewish Era in January, 1892. Their inclination towards premillennialism and Zionism was immediately evident; see the following images from it. From my paper; "The Synod of 1892 document said (Fles's) Classis Muskegon initiated a request 'to support the above mentioned Mission.'" Fles and the CRC began their Mission to the Jews in support of several other missions in various cities that same year.

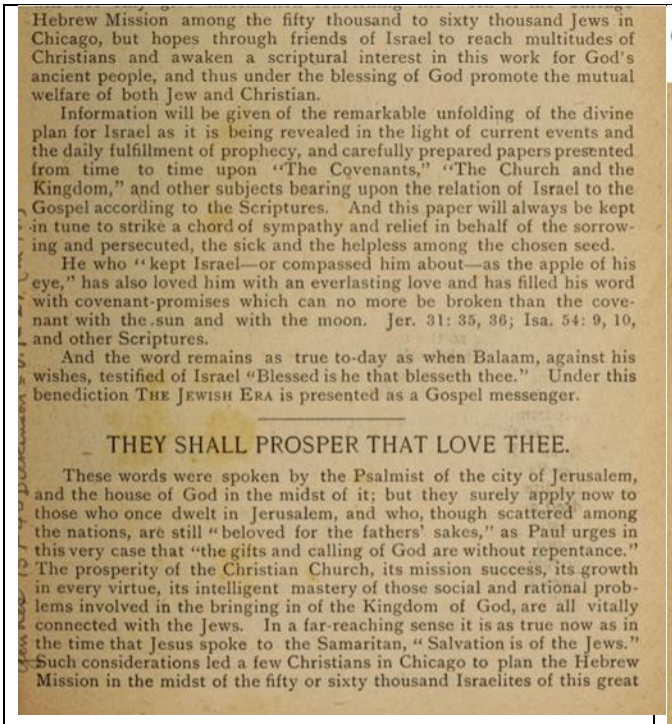
Fles published an article about the restoration of Israel in the popular The Volksvriend Iowan newspaper on July 8, 1886, right after that CRC Synod session. "Israel's Present and Future" was on Jeremiah 30:17 and said, "Israel will be so despised by the nations that it will not be looked after to help them out: no one cares for her."

Fles wrote another article in The Volksvriend on April 9, 1891. "God's Purpose" or "God's Intention."

Terug naar resultaten
De Volksvriend
09-04-1891
XVIIde Jaargang. ORANGE CITY. SIOUX COUNTY. IOWA. DONDERDAG. 9 April 1891.
Gods Bedoeling.
De Volksvriend
09-04-1891
en nationaal sterven; een gemeentelijk sterven, een
sterven van wetten, instellingen enz., daarom spreekt
men van een politieken dood sterven, enz. Toen Au-
gustus keizer werd, stierf de Romeinsche Republiek.
Toen Nederland bij Frankrijk werd ingelijfd door den
Franschen Keizer Napoleon I stierf de Nederlandsche
Republiek. Zoo wordt het hier bedoeld, het niet
weder opstaan meent niet, dat die menschen naar het
lichaam uit den dood niet weder zullen opstaan, maar
die natien zullen te gronde gaan. Waar zijn de Fili-
stijnen, de Assyriers, de Babyloniers en zoo velen an-
dere volken uit den ouden en nieuwen tijd, die hun
schrik gaven in het land der levenden? Waar is het
machtige Romeinsche keizerrijk, welks ijzeren klauw
Jerusalem verpletterde? Vergaan, verdwenen! Alzoo
zegt de Profeet, zullen eenmaal al de vijanden van
Gods volk uitgeroeid worden. Want de Heere ge-
denkt in der eeuwigheid aan zijn Verbond. En zij,
die meenden Israel te kunnen verdelgen, zullen zelf
verdelgd worden door Gods Almacht.
GIJ O HEERE! HADT DIT VOLK VERMEERDERD, GIJ
HADT DIT VOLK VERMEERDERD, GIJ WAART VERHEER-
LIJKT GEWORDEN, GIJ HEBT HEN IN ALLE EINDEN
DES AARDRIJKS WEGGEDAAN.
moest lucht hebben, en nu gaat men hier of daar
de eenzaamheid knielen en men maakt het aan de
Heere bekend. O, welk een zegen voor den mensc
voor den zondaar, dat hij tot den troon der genad
kan gaan, tot den God der genade om het hart vo
Hem uit te storten. Waarlijk, "zulk bidden in
grootste smart, dat is reeds troost voor 't bidder
hart."
ALS UWE TUCHTIGING OVER HEM WAS.
Ja, zoo gaat het menigmaal met Gods kindere
Als de Heere tuchtigt, dan zoekt men Hem. Vel
zullen tot in eeuwigheid getuigen: Had de Heere m
niet tegen gekomen, wat zou er van mij zijn gewo
den! Zoo zal het ook Israel gaan. Gods roede ov
hen heeft Juda (voor een gedeelte althans) van
afgoderij verlost. En Gods tuchtiging zal het gehe
le volk eenmaal terechtbrengen. Uit het diepst g
voel van machteloosheid en zondigheid en door h
geloof in zijn eeuwige trouw zullen zij Hem aanro
pen van Wien het geloof juicht: "Gansch hulpelo
tot Hem gevloden, zal Hij ten redder zijn.
Muskegon, Mich. J. I. FLES.

I doubt that this timing was a coincidence. Blackstone's letter to President Harrison was dated March 5, 1891. The Volksvriend printed an article about his Memorial on March 26 which favored Blackstone's "important petition … born from a conference of Jews and Christians." (It had already been held in Chicago).

From the 1892 Jewish Era:



Hebrew Mission among the fifty thousand to sixty thousand Jews in Chicago, but hopes through friends of Israel to reach multitudes of Christians and awaken a scriptural interest in this work for God's ancient people, and thus under the blessing of God promote the mutual welfare of both Jew and Christian.

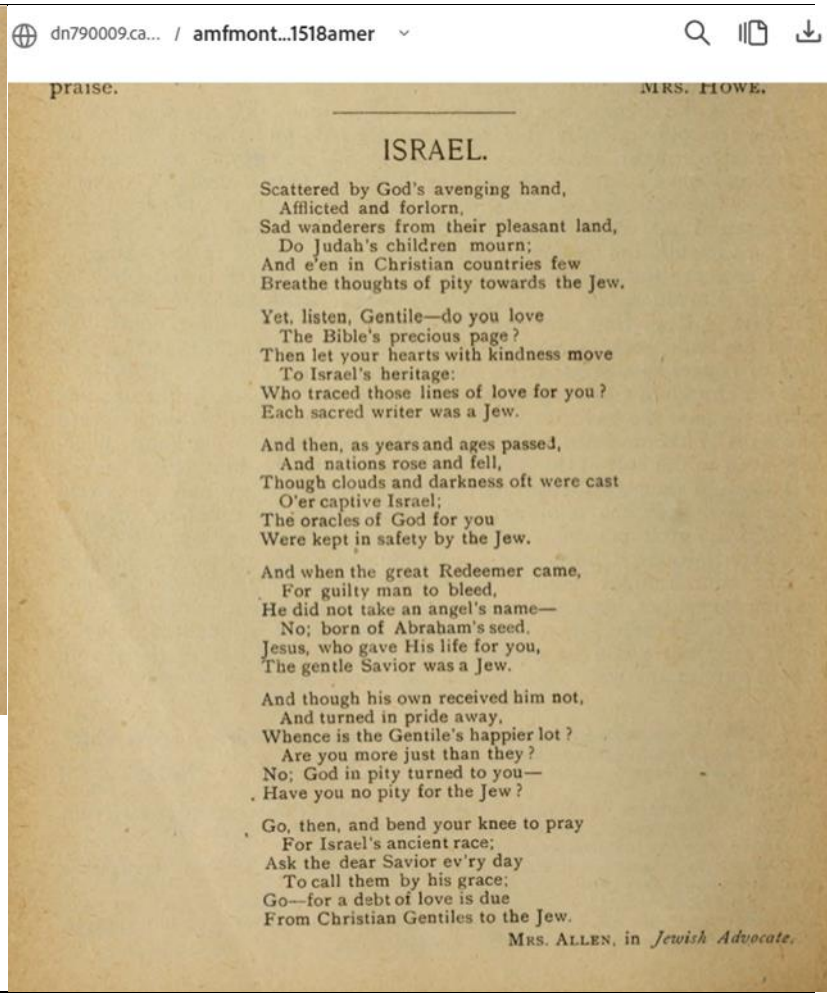
Information will be given of the remarkable unfolding of the divine plan for Israel as it is being revealed in the light of current events and the daily fulfillment of prophecy, and carefully prepared papers presented from time to time upon "The Covenants," "The Church and the Kingdom," and other subjects bearing upon the relation of Israel to the Gospel according to the Scriptures. And this paper will always be kept in tune to strike a chord of sympathy and relief in behalf of the sorrowing and persecuted, the sick and the helpless among the chosen seed.

He who "kept Israel—or compassed him about—as the apple of his eye," has also loved him with an everlasting love and has filled his word with covenant-promises which can no more be broken than the covenant with the sun and with the moon. Jer. 31: 35, 36; Isa. 54: 9, 10, and other Scriptures.

And the word remains as true to-day as when Balaam, against his wishes, testified of Israel "Blessed is he that blesseth thee." Under this benediction THE JEWISH ERA is presented as a Gospel messenger.

THEY SHALL PROSPER THAT LOVE THEE.

These words were spoken by the Psalmist of the city of Jerusalem, and the house of God in the midst of it; but they surely apply now to those who once dwelt in Jerusalem, and who, though scattered among the nations, are still "beloved for the fathers' sakes," as Paul urges in this very case that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The prosperity of the Christian Church, its mission success, its growth in every virtue, its intelligent mastery of those social and rational problems involved in the bringing in of the Kingdom of God, are all vitally connected with the Jews. In a far-reaching sense it is as true now as in the time that Jesus spoke to the Samaritan, "Salvation is of the Jews." Such considerations led a few Christians in Chicago to plan the Hebrew Mission in the midst of the fifty or sixty thousand Israelites of this great



dn790009.ca... / amfmont...1518amer

praise. MRS. HOWE.

ISRAEL.

Scattered by God's avenging hand,
Afflicted and forlorn,
Sad wanderers from their pleasant land,
Do Judah's children mourn;
And e'en in Christian countries few
Breathe thoughts of pity towards the Jew.

Yet, listen, Gentile—do you love
The Bible's precious page?
Then let your hearts with kindness move
To Israel's heritage:
Who traced those lines of love for you?
Each sacred writer was a Jew.

And then, as years and ages passed,
And nations rose and fell,
Though clouds and darkness oft were cast
O'er captive Israel;
The oracles of God for you
Were kept in safety by the Jew.

And when the great Redeemer came,
For guilty man to bleed,
He did not take an angel's name—
No; born of Abraham's seed.
Jesus, who gave His life for you,
The gentle Savior was a Jew.

And though his own received him not,
And turned in pride away,
Whence is the Gentile's happier lot?
Are you more just than they?
No; God in pity turned to you—
Have you no pity for the Jew?

Go, then, and bend your knee to pray
For Israel's ancient race;
Ask the dear Savior ev'ry day
To call them by his grace;
Go—for a debt of love is due
From Christian Gentiles to the Jew.

MRS. ALLEN, in *Jewish Advocate.*

North Street Christian Reformed Church's (in Zeeland) first minister when they began in 1882-1883, Rev. Fles, and their second minister, Rev. Riemersma likely went to the 1893 Chicago World's Fair to witness about Jesus. Blackstone was a member of the World's Columbian Commission for the Chicago Fair, and met with President Grover Cleveland in that role. D. L. Moody held huge revival meetings nearby under a circus tent. In 1895, Riemersma became a trustee of the Chicago Hebrew Mission board.

Riemersma wrote a (valuable) biography of Fles in The Jewish Era in 1894. (This is mentioned in the main paper too, see that end note 2 for a link to it.)

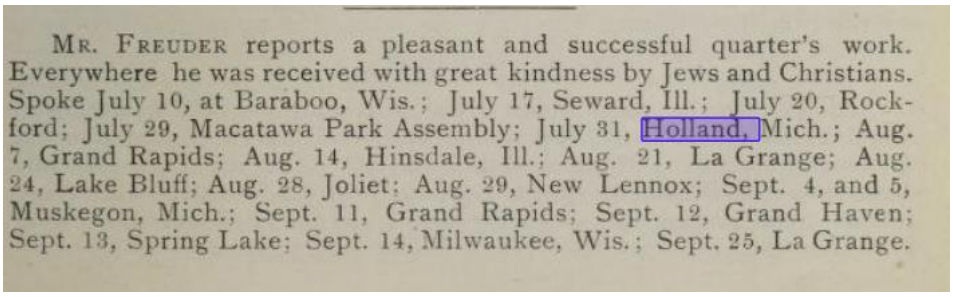
"Begun in 1896 and initially written in Dutch under the title De Heidenwereld, the magazine has consistently promoted the missionary outreach of the Christian Reformed and Reformed Churches." Rev. Fles wrote a monthly column in it. My paper once explained that this interesting source had not been digitized yet. It is at Heritage Hall, but the RCA doesn't have a copy of it.

I finally acted as an unofficial contact person and did everything necessary in order to do so (e.g. I contacted the 90-year-old Dr. Swierenga, former head of the RCA archive, again and received his instructions to try again. I went to the CRC archive, and randomly? met Dr. Thompson in 2021. I defended Christian Zionism to him = "Well, actually in 1866 ..."and

then had to do more than I've ever done before. I asked the new archivist if I'd receive any acknowledgement. She said, "No, you won't, but you will get access to the material.")

That material began with an ode to Zionism and Jerusalem (it is available elsewhere). Rev. Fles made several good points in the missions magazine as early as 1900. He sounds too much like Blackstone's article for it to be a coincidence, but how can we tell who influenced whom?

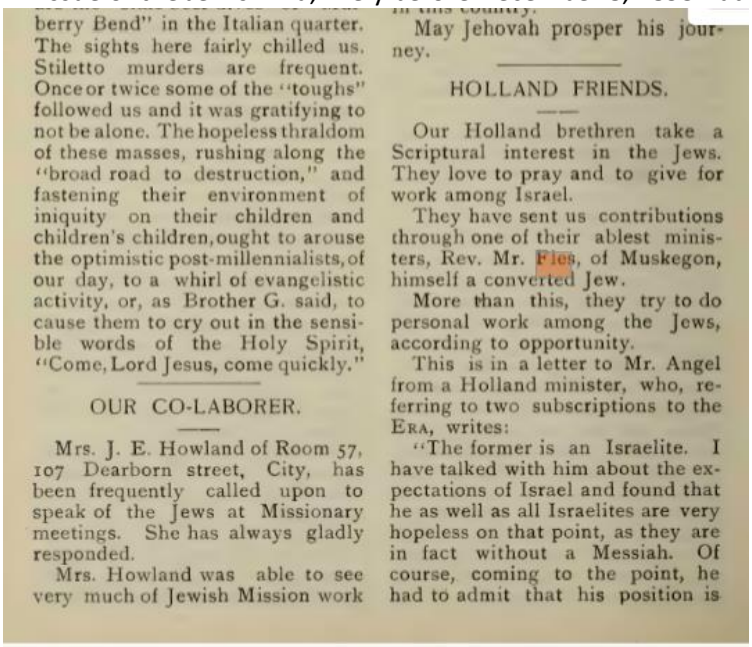
Now let me go to 1897 and Theodor Herzl. He has been called the 'Father of Zionism' (so was Blackstone). https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/opinion/352005/theodor-herzl-launches-the-first-zionist-congress-in-1897/ .



MR. FREUDER reports a pleasant and successful quarter's work. Everywhere he was received with great kindness by Jews and Christians. Spoke July 10, at Baraboo, Wis.; July 17, Seward, Ill.; July 20, Rockford; July 29, Macatawa Park Assembly; July 31, Holland, Mich.; Aug. 7, Grand Rapids; Aug. 14, Hinsdale, Ill.; Aug. 21, La Grange; Aug. 24, Lake Bluff; Aug. 28, Joliet; Aug. 29, New Lennox; Sept. 4, and 5, Muskegon, Mich.; Sept. 11, Grand Rapids; Sept. 12, Grand Haven; Sept. 13, Spring Lake; Sept. 14, Milwaukee, Wis.; Sept. 25, La Grange.

I can't prove this list shows that a passionate insider like Fles chose which cities to visit. But page 122 of my paper notes other later examples of the same type of carefully selective fund-raising efforts.

https://archive.org/details/amfmonthly1518amer/page/n1/mode/1up The entire publication can be hard to maneuver!
https://archive.org/details/amfmonthly1518amer/page/n301/mode/1up
An issue of the Jewish Era, likely before December 8, 1893 had this image below;



berry Bend" in the Italian quarter. The sights here fairly chilled us. Stiletto murders are frequent. Once or twice some of the "toughs" followed us and it was gratifying to not be alone. The hopeless thraldom of these masses, rushing along the "broad road to destruction," and fastening their environment of iniquity on their children and children's children, ought to arouse the optimistic post-millennialists, of our day, to a whirl of evangelistic activity, or, as Brother G. said, to cause them to cry out in the sensible words of the Holy Spirit, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

OUR CO-LABORER.

Mrs. J. E. Howland of Room 57, 107 Dearborn street, City, has been frequently called upon to speak of the Jews at Missionary meetings. She has always gladly responded.

Mrs. Howland was able to see very much of Jewish Mission work

May Jehovah prosper his journey.

HOLLAND FRIENDS.

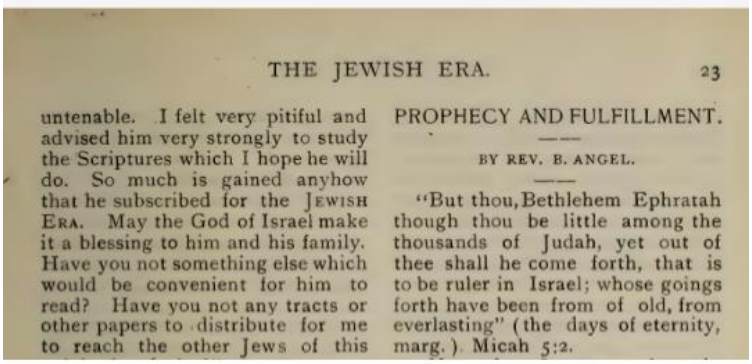
Our Holland brethren take a Scriptural interest in the Jews. They love to pray and to give for work among Israel.

They have sent us contributions through one of their ablest ministers, Rev. Mr. Fles, of Muskegon, himself a converted Jew.

More than this, they try to do personal work among the Jews, according to opportunity.

This is in a letter to Mr. Angel from a Holland minister, who, referring to two subscriptions to the ERA, writes:

"The former is an Israelite. I have talked with him about the expectations of Israel and found that he as well as all Israelites are very hopeless on that point, as they are in fact without a Messiah. Of course, coming to the point, he had to admit that his position is



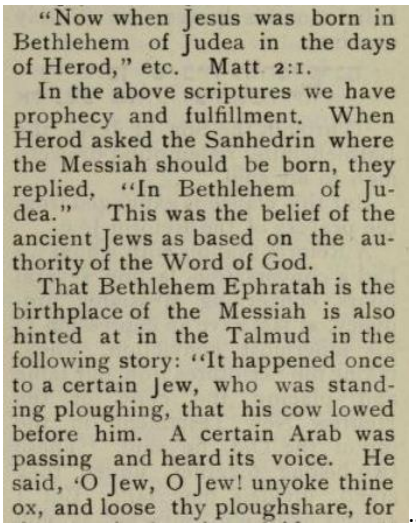
THE JEWISH ERA. 23

untenable. I felt very pitiful and advised him very strongly to study the Scriptures which I hope he will do. So much is gained anyhow that he subscribed for the JEWISH ERA. May the God of Israel make it a blessing to him and his family. Have you not something else which would be convenient for him to read? Have you not any tracts or other papers to distribute for me to reach the other Jews of this

PROPHECY AND FULFILLMENT.

BY REV. B. ANGEL.

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (the days of eternity, marg.). Micah 5:2.



"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod," etc. Matt 2:1.

In the above scriptures we have prophecy and fulfillment. When Herod asked the Sanhedrin where the Messiah should be born, they replied, "In Bethlehem of Judea." This was the belief of the ancient Jews as based on the authority of the Word of God.

That Bethlehem Ephratah is the birthplace of the Messiah is also hinted at in the Talmud in the following story: "It happened once to a certain Jew, who was standing ploughing, that his cow lowed before him. A certain Arab was passing and heard its voice. He said, 'O Jew, O Jew! unyoke thine ox, and loose thy ploughshare, for

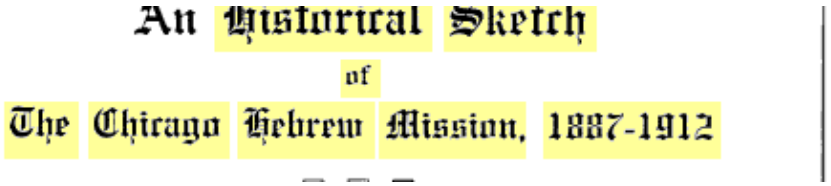
…

From within the above image, in their pages 22-23 " …through one of their ablest ministers, Rev. Mr. Fles, of Muskegon, himself a converted Jew. More than this, they try to do personal work among the Jews [of Chicago?], according to opportunity.

This is in a letter to Mr. Angel from a Holland minister, who … writes: The former is an Israelite. I have talked with him [unnamed] about the **expectations of Israel** and found that he as well as all Israelites are very hopeless on that fact without a Messiah. Of course, coming to the point, he had to admit that his position is **untenable**. I felt very pitiful and advised him very strongly to study the Scriptures which I hope he will do. So much is gained anyhow that he subscribed for the JEWISH ERA. May the God of Israel make it a blessing to him and his family. Have you not something else which would be convenient fo him to read?" This section does not appear to be Fles talking.

That online source only goes up to 1896! So I've used the following one as well.

Twenty-five years of blessing : historical sketch of the Chicago Hebrew Mission, 1887-1912
(A hardcopy of it was kept on the shelves of Calvin's Hekman Library.)
https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112037757421&seq=5
https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112037757421&seq=52&q1=Fles&start=1
I don't think this second link provides the full view of their later years as I intended.
Google Books has also digitized this book. Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



An Historical Sketch
of
The Chicago Hebrew Mission, 1887-1912

Here are pictures from these sources to show parts of the timelines.

Term expiring 1893.

Col. Geo. R. Clark
Chas. E. Simmons
E. P. Rice
Rev. Elwood M. Wherry, D. D.
Rev. J. Shelly Meyer
Prof. Samuel Ives Curtiss, D. D.
Mrs. L. A. Calder

Term expiring 1894.

Mrs. J. M. Horton
Mrs. A. F. Wood
Miss E. Dryer
Mrs. T. C. Rounds
Geo. A. Mackenzie
Watts De Golyer
Mrs. J. E. Howland

Finances.

From what we have written, it will be seen how greatly God has prospered us financially. Our small beginning on 12th Street has increased, our properties today being valued at about $60,000, with an indebtedness upon them of about $10,000, of which we have already spoken and which we hope may entirely be removed this Quarter-Centennial year—"the good hand of our God being upon us for good." And we would be glad if a start were made in this direction today (Nov. 6th) and before this Quarter-Centennial year shall have closed we may be able to burn our mortgages and shout our hallelujahs.

It may be interesting to know something concerning the money that God has been pleased to put in our hands during the years past. We feel that we should add to the glory of God that the large amount of money that has been raised the past twenty-five years has come to us in answer to prayer. Our habit has been to "Ask the Lord and tell His people." The answers to prayer have been marvelous. Many, many times has it seemed impossible for us to meet our liabilities—even our daily needs—but our loving, heavenly Father has proved Himself to be "the God of the impossible" as we have waited upon Him, and He has sent us funds in unexpected, unsolicited ways. It would not glorify God if we did not mention the funds that have come to us through our faithful friends of the German Church of the DeWitt Memorial of New York City, of the Christian Reformed Church of America, and the Reformed Church of North America. The first named in the very early days of the Mission; the second sending us, through the Rev. J. I. Fles, their Treasurer; the third, through Rev. C. Kuyper, who has charge of the funds. Many times has the Doxology been sung over the timely offerings of these dear saints. From Maine to California, aye, even from *foreign lands*, have come rich gifts, a beautiful illustration of the time when the kings of the earth shall offer their gifts to the King of Israel, in order that they may worship God acceptably in their own land. We wish there were time to tell of some of these wonderful answers. Perhaps one in connection with this Reading Room would be in point.

An Answer to Prayer.

After we purchased the Reading Room, it was necessary to put about $400 worth of repairs, including lumber, upon the building. We only had about $80 on hand. Understanding that the will of the Lord was to go ahead and He would supply the need, we went to one of our friends, a lumber dealer, and said to him, "Now, David, you can get lumber much cheaper than we. Will you see at what price you can get this for us?" handing him a memorandum the carpenter had given. He sat down at the telephone and called up a large firm and said, "I am interested in The Chicago Hebrew Mission. The Superintendent, Mrs. Rounds, is here and tells me they are making some repairs on a building they have just bought and I am going to do what I can, and I want you to give them 1,300

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Original from UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Before 1917?

"**It would not glorify God if we did not mention the funds that have come to us through our faithful friends** of the German Church of the DeWitt Memorial of New York City, **of the Christian Reformed Church of America, and the Reformed Church of North America.** The first named in the very early days of the Mission: **the second sending us, through the Rev. J. I. Fles, their Treasurer: the third, through Rev. C. Kuyper, who has charge of the funds**. Many times has the Doxology been sung over the timely offerings of **these dear saints**."

ELECTION JANUARY 14, 1913

President, REV. CHAS. A. BLANCHARD, D. D.
Vice-President, WM. E. BLACKSTONE
Acting Secretary, REV. B. B. SUTCLIFEE
Treasurer, MRS. T. C. ROUNDS, 1425 Solon Place, Chicago, Ill.
Assistant Treasurer, SIMON DEKKER
Auditors, CHAS. VICKERS, C. W. C. CHANDLER
Superintendent, MRS. T. C. ROUNDS, 1425 Solon Place

Trustees term expiring in 1914:

Rev. Wm. Stuart
Wm. E. Blackstone
Prof. F. Risberg
Rev. H. B. Schuurmans
Mrs. Wm. Borden
Mrs. T. S. Smith
Miss E. Dryer

Trustees term expiring in 1915:

Simon Dekker
Mrs. T. C. Rounds
Chas. Vickers
Mrs. J. E. Howland
Rev. E. Gruenstein, D. D.
_____
A. M. McConoughey

Trustees term expiring in 1916:

Rev. Chas. A. Blanchard, D.D.
Rev. B. B. Sutcliffe
J. P. Roberson
Miss Mary C. Howard
Rev. C. Kuyper
A. F. Gaylord
Rev. J. I. Fles

Executive Committee

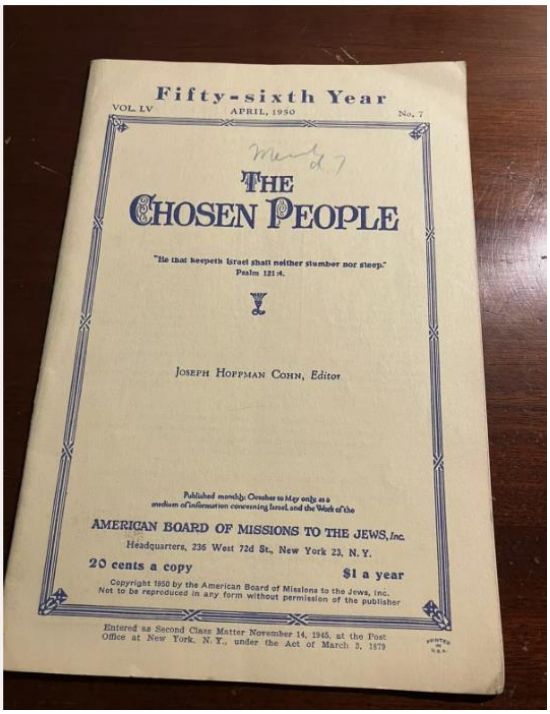
Simon Dekker, *Chairman*
Wm. E. Blackstone
Rev. Chas. A. Blanchard, D. D.

I'll pick one name out from the above to see what a search on him shows;" What is 'The Responsibility of the Church in Relation to Israel'? The Rev. B. B. Sutcliffe gave seven reasons for this responsibility..." He was associated with Moody Bible Institute and a Pres. of "Multnomah School of the Bible Interdenominational— Evangelistic" in Portland, Oregon. Simon Dekker was an assistant treasurer. Fles's premillennial eschatology had probably also influenced the RCA minister, Rev. C. Kuyper. This likely influence may have been via RCA seminary professor, Dr. Egbert Winter, who had probably known Fles when both were in Iowa. - Per my paper and its sources, see pages 80 – 81.

A link to that picture.

(more on next page)

I was looking into Rev. B. B. Sutcliffe (mentioned here; https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/**1943**/02/popular-interest-in-prophecy.) It notes, "The very foundation for premillennial teaching is the Jewish restoration." Then I came across this – here are image snippets.
The American Board of Missions to the Jews was an independent evangelical Christian "faith mission" founded in 1894. Unsurprisingly, Dr. Mitch Glaser has more information available about them. 1950 was their 56th year.



Fifty-sixth Year

VOL. LV APRIL, 1950 No. 7

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

"He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Psalm 121:4.

JOSEPH HOFFMAN COHN, *Editor*

Published monthly, October to May only as a medium of information concerning Israel and the Work of the

AMERICAN BOARD OF MISSIONS TO THE JEWS, Inc.

Headquarters, 236 West 72d St., New York 23, N. Y.

20 cents a copy $1 a year

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https://archives.wheaton.edu/repositories/4/resources/116

Historical Information

American Board of Missions to Jews (Beth Sar Shalom) is a nondenominational, independent faith mission, evangelical in doctrine, founded in 1894, as a pioneer in Jewish missions. Its missionaries and ministers are ordained by different denominations. The primary aim of the ABMJ is witnessing to Jews, and discipling and involving them in local church programs after conversion.

The work was begun by a Jewish rabbi, Leopold Cohn, who came to the United States in 1892, settled in Brooklyn, New York, and was converted to Christianity. He was succeeded by his son, Joseph Hoffman Cohn, who expanded the work to include Canada, England, Europe, Israel, and South America. On the death of Cohn, the mission continued under the direction of a Board of Directors.

Ministries include centers, literature distribution, Bible conferences, television specials, radio programs, media presentations of the gospel, campus and youth ministries. A student training program gives guidance and financial support to promising young Jewish converts and Jewish Christians so that they may attend Bible schools and colleges for education as Jewish evangelists. The Jewish Training Institute offers a three-year course to those Christians who are interested in Jewish evangelism. These activities are spread throughout the United States and Canada as well as in Europe, Israel, and South America.

Its publications include: The Chosen People, official publication of the mission; The End Times, a bimonthly radio publication); Shepherd of Israel, a periodical directed to unconverted Jews; tracts, books, and a Jewish art calendar. A fifteen-minute radio program, "The Chosen People News Hour," is broadcast five days a week throughout the United States. Foreign language broadcasts are conducted in France and Israel. Area prophetic conferences are also held in the United States and Canada in cooperation with local evangelical churches. Summer conferences are also held at various campgrounds in the United States and Canada.

In 1982 ABMJ had a staff of 92 missionaries and 17 clerics.

See less

I don't know whether Fles or the CRC had any interactions with this group, but note that Joseph Cohn "was converted" in or after 1892 in Brooklyn, NY. It's possible to find more on this mission, and maybe discover whether Fles knew that "Rev. B. Angel" mentioned in an image above?